MEDIA RELEASE

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Catholic leaders expanding their vision of education excellence

Twenty-three Catholic education leaders from 7 Dioceses across Queensland and New South Wales have recently returned from a 10-day Educational Benchmarking Study Tour to California, United States of America and Ontario, Canada, where they discussed contemporary education initiatives and challenges with colleagues from 15 schools, colleges and Education Boards.

The Benchmarking Study Tour forms a part of the QELi Executive Development for Educational Leaders program, customised for Catholic school leaders and hosted by Brisbane Catholic Education. It is an exceptional new program that brings together experienced Catholic school principals and system leaders. It exposes participants to current research, policy and benchmarking tools in education, to ensure the sector continues to provide innovative, exciting and responsive schooling for all young people.

Program facilitator, Phil Billington, says, “The study tour was an amazing and rewarding experience, both professionally and personally for participants. We were overwhelmed by the hospitality and the generous sharing of time and expertise from all of our hosts and their teams. Our delegates had the unique opportunity to observe different approaches to a range of educational challenges, and discuss specific strategic priorities, and successes across teaching, leadership and faith initiatives with teachers, school leaders and regional teams. It also enabled participants to share practice across their own settings at home and the opportunity to work together. Having spoken with each of our delegates and through the Study Tour Reflection sessions, I can attest that they have found this benchmarking study tour a rich and worthwhile experience that will elevate their overall understanding and application of the program learnings to their local contexts.”
During the USA leg of the study tour, delegates spoke with education leaders from prominent schools and universities, including University of California, The School of Arts and Enterprise (The SAE) and Echo Horizon Elementary School (an Apple Distinguished school) in Los Angeles. These discussions highlighted the diversity of resourcing available across the US whilst highlighting the resourcing and opportunities that are enjoyed in Australia. In spite of resourcing challenges the study tour revealed passionate, optimistic and dedicated teachers in both the Public and Charter schools.

One of the highlights from their time in Canada was a workshop hosted by eminent author and educational leadership expert, Dr Kenneth Leithwood, researcher Ms Catherine McCullough and Assistant Deputy Minister of Leadership and Learning, Ontario Ministry of Education, Dr John Malloy. The delegates were immersed in a very open exchange of insights around schools, student achievement and the positive impact of leadership.

Ms Barbara McMorrow, Director at Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board (PVNCCDSB), says, “This professional learning visit has provided a great opportunity for us to learn from our Australian visitors and build new teaching networks between our two communities. It was also an opportune moment to showcase the work we are engaged in as a system to build a genuine culture of learning and share our commitment to deep learning and improving the instructional and assessment practices in all our classrooms.”

Dr Stephen Brown, CEO and program designer, QELi, says, “QELi is delighted to be working in partnership with Catholic education on this ground-breaking, year-long executive leadership development program. We are confident that, over the course of the program, each of these leaders will solidify their leadership capabilities and apply their learnings to independently researched position papers that will shape significant complexities within their schools and dioceses.”

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Photos are available